



The Guild of Location Managers

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Expenses...

(a.k.a. The Malcolm Treen Life History #98):

One of the funniest expense claims I ever heard was at LWT, where a Location Manager working on *Dempsey and Makepiece* had happily parked his make-up and wardrobe vans outside a normal suburban house in a normal street. About two hours into the shoot he was accosted by the lady from number 37.

"I've got a business to run here dearie. You're interfering with my clientele," was her opening gambit.

The Location Manager said, *"Sorry, didn't you get the residents letter I sent round?"*

"No. I did not."

"Oh dear. My apologies, you should have got a letter. Obviously if you are losing trade or customers then."

"Of course I'm losing trade. They park here, outside my premises, when they want to come and see me."

"Well for how long?"

"About an hour or so."

"Right, so what have you lost in terms of earnings?" he said, trying to be as diplomatic as possible.

(You are probably already ahead of me but you would be wrong - nasty rude minds! Mind you we all thought that at the time).

"Well about £150 at the end of the day."

"Right well, I'm sure we can compensate for that." By now he just wanted her to go away.

"Oh, that's fine duckie." She replied.

And then he got to the \$64,000 question, *"So what kind of business do you run from here?"*

"Oh! I'm a fortune teller, they all come here to know what the future holds!"

So of course his expenses read, *"Gratuity of £150 to clairvoyant, who didn't know we were coming."*



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...and Flights Of Fancy...

Which brings me onto planes, I know not why.

We were filming in France for a series called *Wish Me Luck* based on the exploits of the S.O.E. (*Special Overseas Executive*), who were the people we used to train in this country and then drop into France to help the French Resistance.

Because of time and distance our recces were often based out of Biggin Hill in small aircraft, so that, a bit like the S.O.E. we could get in and out quickly. We would catch a small plane be dropped into enemy territory, be gone for about three days or so and return via the same route.

Looking back I should have appreciated those days more, a sensible Production Manager, a realistic budget and TIME.

Anyway the Biggin Hill staff were an agreeable lot, who would write down their 'Duty Free' order before you flew out, with phrases like, *"You don't smoke? Well you must know someone who does. With prices like these how can you refuse?"*

They would cajole you into ordering anything and everything, and would be waiting for you upon your return.

And then to the flight itself.

Don't ask me what sort of plane. I have never been very good on planes, I'm afraid. I was once asked whilst standing at the end of a runway at Heathrow (in a previous life as a Boom Operator) to identify the planes as they were taking off by the Sound Supervisor.

During a pause in recording (*of "Thick as Thieves" starring Bob Hoskins and John Thaw*) he asked us to get close-up wild-tracks of the planes landing.

Myself and my boss, Graham Walbrin, were not very good on planes, and all we could muster once they had passed by were inane comments like, *"that was a blue one"* or even more detailed, *"that was a green one, with yellow stripes"*, and even *"er, that must be one of those Air Canada ones, its got that pretty leaf on the side"*.

The Sound Supervisor, Paul Faraday (*such a sensible surname name for a man on the technical side of things, I have always thought*), monitoring this over the loudspeaker in the OB truck, came over our headphones loud and clear, *" You complete pillocks, I meant 'identify them' that means 727, Tri-Star, that sort of thing, you know."*

"No I'm sorry I'm afraid we don't."

"Oh. Christ, well do the best you can then."



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I turned round to face the runway again and I swear the next jumbo was coming directly at me; it was about to take my head off. Graham was already making a dash for it, yelling, "*I can see the whites of the pilots eyes!*"

When we played back the recording you could hear the screech of the plane, the thump as the boom and headphones hit the deck and then the sound of two pairs of boots running into the distance. Perhaps we had strayed a little closer to the runway's edge than we should have done.

However, I digress, back to the small plane on the recces. It usually came equipped with a pilot and a hamper. The hamper had all sorts of exotic things like 'quails eggs' in it, that I had never sampled. It also had scotch, gin, brandy and beer. While the more adventurous ones such as the designer and director tucked into the 'fare', I was quite happy with the liquid part of the deal. The one thing *Wish Me Luck* did teach me over the series was to be more adventurous with my food intake; by the end of series three I was vying with the best of them over the eggs and brown bread.

One memorable 'Technical Recce' we took the same route but because of numbers of folk we needed two planes. On our approach back the continuity girl who was nervous about flying anyway, even in a jumbo, made me keep talking to her in order to take her mind off the flight. The return journey seemed worse but at one point her heart went in her mouth as the other plane flying happily alongside us, both teams waving at one another, suddenly ducked underneath, came back over the top, and resumed its position.

"*Ho!*" cried our pilot, "*that's given someone in traffic control a change of underpants!*" Meaning that the two lights on his screen would momentarily have merged into one.

"*Stupid twit,*" muttered the continuity girl looking at the other plane, and we all berated the other pilot for being well "over the top". It turned out a few days later it was **our** plane that had done the prank and flown sideways **underneath** the other one. At that altitude we had no points of reference; you cannot tell who is doing what to whom.

The pilot in the other plane was our pilots' boss and he nearly lost his job because of his tomfoolery. Strange what a planeload of television people make you do. I wonder if he would have done the same with a day trip of city brokers?

And finally the best flight I ever had was a return trip from Lyons. I had been lucky enough to get dispatched to France again on *The Knock*, the Customs and Excise drama series that Bronson & Knight made for LWT.

I was sent on the Monday (having been briefed on the Friday evening), with the words from the Production Manager ringing in my ears, "*...and remember, when you get out there, the most important scene is the one in the vineyard, where the car blows up. That is what you should concentrate on and find first.*" I think he had to turn the light off in my office; such was the speed with which I left.

Well the actual shoot is another story, as they say, another learning curve in the gastronomic area. I had led a very sheltered existence (anyone who asks for "*Steak tar-tar, well done, please*" must be from a humble background, be fair).



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No, it was the flight back that, for me, was the highlight of the shoot. For reasons of economy the Production Manager sent me back a week early. I didn't argue, I had been away for too long and was happy to return.

I flew from Lyons airport on a Saturday morning; my French chums took me to the airport to see me off. I was catching the 11 o'clock flight. We arrived in plenty of time for a couple of final glasses of *Pastis*, before I headed for the departure gate. I had had a marvellous time and was sorry to say goodbye. So, already a little tired and emotional, I boarded the plane.

It was *Air France* (a blue one as I recall) and I made my way to my seat. It was at this point I realised I was in first class; quite how this came about I have no idea. Maybe the Production Coordinator had done a deal with the airline, I do not know and never did inquire. I was just grateful - to whoever had organised it - for the one and only time in my life I was ever sat at the front.

I looked around me and realised that I was the only one in first class, and that there was only about six on the plane in total. The steward ostentatiously pulled the curtains to avert my gaze from the poor folks behind (or was it the other way round?), and there I was, just the steward and me (sounds like the title for a song).

In a charming French accent he enquired, *"Would you like a drink before we take off, sir?"*

"Pardon?" I had never heard those words before! *"Would you like a drink before we take off, sir?"*

"Well, err, yes, I suppose, err, what have you got?"

"We have champagne, gin, cognac, whisky."

"Em, I suppose, err, champagne, would be rather nice, thank you."

I sipped the bubbles and mentally reviewed the six weeks of filming and relaxed. As the plane taxied to the end of the runway he stepped forward, took my empty glass and bottle, secured himself in his seat and we took off.

At this point it is important to remember that the flight from Lyons to Heathrow is only about one hour and fifteen minutes. There was a click of a seatbelt and he was by me again.

"Would you like an aperitif, sir?"

"Well that's very kind of you, what have you got?"

"We have gin, Martini, Dubonnet, Ricard,"

"Thank you I'll have a gin and tonic, please."



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I sipped the cool liquid and gently bit the lemon. Why does a drink you have been 'served' always taste so good? Within minutes the 'real' cutlery had arrived and I chose(!) from the menu.

Just before the meal arrived came words again in that soft accent, *"Would you like a drink with the meal, sir?"*

"Well that's extraordinarily kind of you. What have you got?"

"Well we have red wine or white wine."

"Red, I think."

"The Ctes du Rhone or the Maon?"

"Er, er, I think, er..."

"I tell you what, sir, I will bring them both and you decide."

"That's very, very kind of you."

The meal arrived, both wines arrived. I tried the food and then tried the Maon. It was very pleasant. I drank it and then I tried the Cte du Rhone and that was very pleasant too.

I paused for coffee.

The steward didn't. *"Would you like a drink with the coffee, sir?"*

"That's ferry kind of you," says I, *"what 'ave you got?"*

"We have cognac, liqueurs, rum"

"I'll have a cognac, please," but I bet I didn't say it like that.

I sipped the cognac, gazed out of the window and to my complete astonishment, Windsor Castle flew past. Well that's the way it looked to me.

We landed and as I stepped off the plane the steward said, *"Thank you for flying Air France, sir."*

I replied, *"No, shank you. Thatsh the bestish flight I ever had."*

A car, thank God, was waiting to take me home. Unfortunately the travel time from Heathrow to my house is only thirty minutes.

"Hello, darhling I'm home." I cried, after nine weeks out of the country.



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"My, God, what the hell has happened to you?" said my wife, taking one look at me in total disbelief.

"I've jutshed had the besht flight I've ever had." I replied.

There was a long pause, which gave me time to sway very gently at least twice to and fro in the doorway.

"Obviously", she said.

Malcolm D.Y.Treen A.I.M.C.